

Problem Priests

Sabbath

Do Do this week's activity on page 67.

How tempting is it to sit rather than stand for hymns in church? How difficult do you find it to close your eyes during prayer? What ways have you distracted others from listening to the sermon? How do your choices affect your ability to truly worship God? (See 1 Samuel 2:12-36; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 575-580.)

Eli saw a man walking toward him quickly. As he got closer, Eli could see the veins in his forehead bulging and the angry look on his face.

Eli sighed deeply and prepared himself for the bad news that was sure to follow.

"Your sons have no business being priests!" the man began angrily.

Sunday

Read Read "Problem Priests."

Learn Begin to learn the power text.

Create Draw, or in some way create, a pair of binoculars. Write out your power text and attach it to the binoculars in some way. Place it where you can see it all week.

Pray Ask God to help you keep in focus all week.



Monday

Read Read 1 Samuel 2:12, 13.

List In your Bible study journal, list five to eight ways you can show respect for others in your family. Also list five to eight ways you can show respect for the things of God—either at home or at church.

Pray Ask God to help you have more respect for Him.

We worship
God when we
focus on Him and
His power.

POWER TEXT

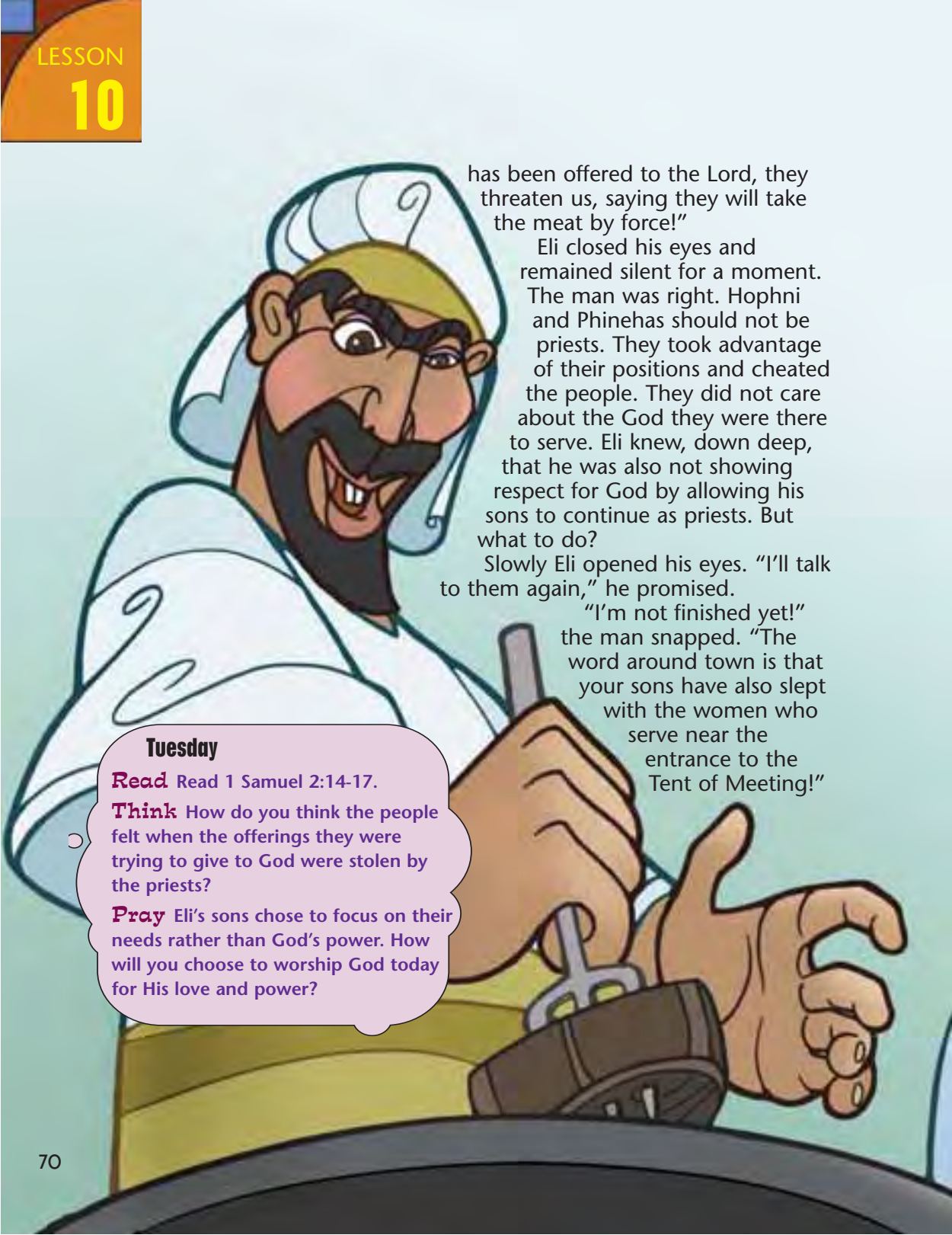
"They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain"

(Isaiah 56:11, NIV).

Eli knew his sons had no respect for the holy things of the tabernacle, for their positions as priests, or even for God. He had tried to correct them, but nothing changed.

The man continued. "None of the priests are content with the pieces of meat that God instructed us to give them, they take even more from the meat that is ours. But *your sons . . .*" The man paused for a long time, glaring at Eli. "Your sons send their servants to us before the fat has even been offered to the Lord as His portion! The servants demand raw meat for the priests to roast. If we protest and tell them that we must wait until the fat





has been offered to the Lord, they threaten us, saying they will take the meat by force!"

Eli closed his eyes and remained silent for a moment. The man was right. Hophni and Phinehas should not be priests. They took advantage of their positions and cheated the people. They did not care about the God they were there to serve. Eli knew, down deep, that he was also not showing respect for God by allowing his sons to continue as priests. But what to do?

Slowly Eli opened his eyes. "I'll talk to them again," he promised.

"I'm not finished yet!" the man snapped. "The word around town is that your sons have also slept with the women who serve near the entrance to the Tent of Meeting!"

Tuesday

Read Read 1 Samuel 2:14-17.

Think How do you think the people felt when the offerings they were trying to give to God were stolen by the priests?

Pray Eli's sons chose to focus on their needs rather than God's power. How will you choose to worship God today for His love and power?

Eli's visitor went on for another five minutes, but Eli was already rehearsing the speech he would give to his sons later that day. Hophni and Phinehas thought of nobody but themselves. They had forgotten who they were and why they were at the tabernacle. The Levites were a special people, set aside to serve God. Only a select few could come so close to God's presence, but Eli's sons just didn't seem to care. They didn't worship God anymore; they worshiped themselves.

The angry Israelite finally finished his complaint and left. Eli

sighed again. He seemed to be doing a lot of that lately. Getting up from his seat, he went off to find his sons. If only they cared about spiritual things the way the young boy Samuel did.

"Why do you do such things?" Eli asked Hophni and Phinehas when he finally found them. "I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours." Eli went on, trying to caution his sons, attempting to convince them to change. It was as if he were talking to stones. His sons were not interested in hearing what Eli had to say. It was too late for lectures.

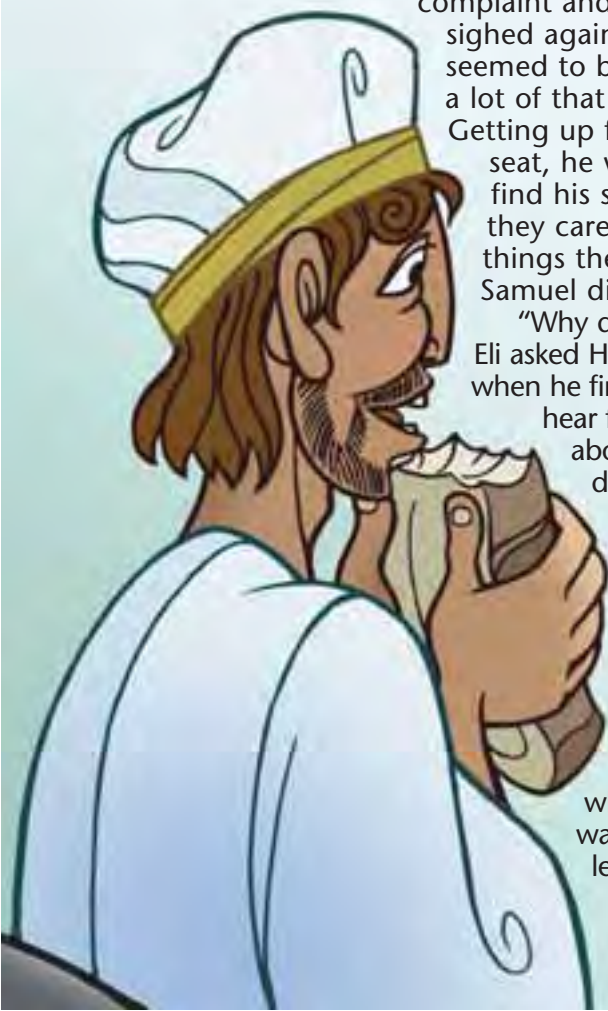
Wednesday

Read Read 1 Samuel 2:18-26.

Think Samuel was the opposite in his behavior to Eli's wicked sons. He loved to find things to do to be helpful.

Talk Talk with family members and discover ways you can help each of your family members—and start to do it.

Pray Thank God that you can worship Him by focusing on Him and His power.



Thursday

Read Read 1 Samuel 2:27-33.

List Draw or write a list of things, activities, people that distract you from thinking about God's power.

Pray Talk with God about helping you to focus on Him alone.



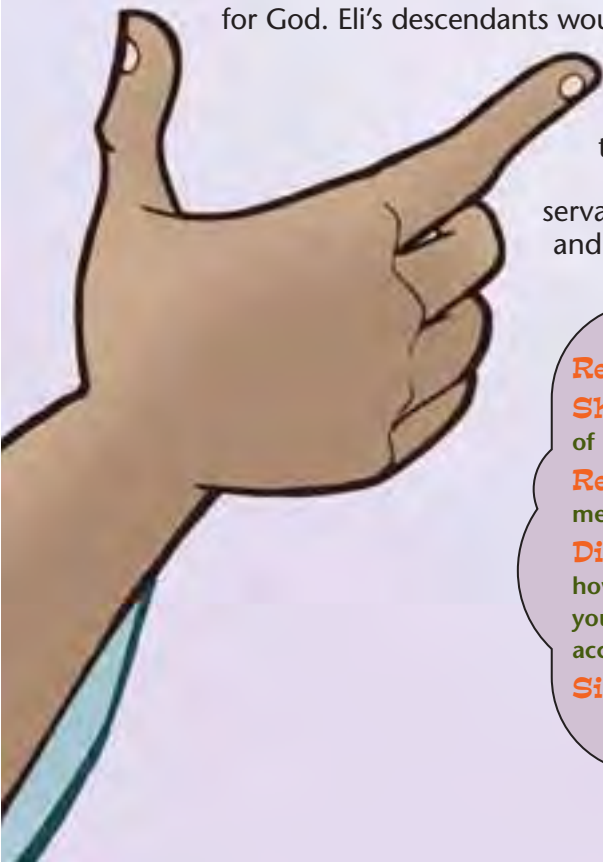
One day God sent another man to visit Eli. This man brought a message from God. "Didn't I speak to your ancestors in a special way when you lived in Egypt? I chose your tribe to have a special place in My community. Your people alone can approach my altar and offer sacrifices to Me. Why do you show Me so little respect by honoring your wicked sons more than you honor Me? They take advantage of My people and take the best portions of every sacrifice."

Eli's eyes became very large, and he slumped on his bench. The messenger continued. Eli's family would not always serve the Lord as priests. The privilege and responsibility were being removed from them because of their carelessness and disrespect for God. Eli's descendants would not be

blessed with long lives.

Hophni and Phinehas would die, both on the same day, because of their contempt for the Lord.

God was going to raise up a faithful servant who would serve Him as priest and would honor God in all that he did.



Friday

Read Read 1 Samuel 2:34-36.

Share At worship, share the story of Eli and his sons with your family.

Recite Say the power text from memory.

Discuss Talk with your family about how to make God your life's focus, not yourself. Think of specific ways you can accomplish that in the coming week.

Sing Sing the chorus of "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" together.